



For Immediate Release  
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## **Supreme Court decision regarding scholarships to students pursuing ministry not expected to impact Michigan**

**Lansing** – State Sen. Jason Allen, R- Traverse City, announced today that a decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court allowing states to deny taxpayer-funded scholarships to students studying to become ministers will not effect legislation pending in Michigan.

“The Supreme Court case differs from the issue we are grappling with,” Allen said. “We simply want to make sure state-funded scholarships are available to all students no matter what their academic field of study, while the case in Washington involves a student studying to become a minister.”

Senate Bills 625-629, 661 and 662 remove the prohibition against theology, divinity and religious education majors from receiving grants or scholarships from the state of Michigan.

Allen introduced the seven-bill, bi-partisan package after learning about Teresa Becker, a student who does not have equal access to the more than \$242 million awarded yearly to students in grants and scholarships because she chose to study theology.

Becker filed a lawsuit against the state last year when they rescinded her scholarship based on her major of study. Federal District Judge George Caram Steeh ruled the state is prohibited from enforcing the statute preventing her from receiving scholarship money.

“Any student should be afforded the right to learn any subject taught at an accredited institution of higher education,” Allen said. “State government should not take away scholarships based solely on whether or not your college major is deemed ‘acceptable.’ I look forward to the Michigan House taking up this legislation.”

Allen’s legislation would affect the Michigan Legislative Award, the Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant, the Michigan Competitive Scholarship, the Part-time Independent Student Grant, and the state’s Tuition Grant programs.

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According to Allen, changing the law would stop the state's prohibition of awarding scholarships to theology and religious studies students and clarify state law to avoid potential lawsuits in the future. Current law could still be deemed a violation of Article I, Sec. 2 of the Michigan's Constitution if not changed.

The bills passed the Senate with a bi-partisan vote and now await action in the House of Representatives.

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